

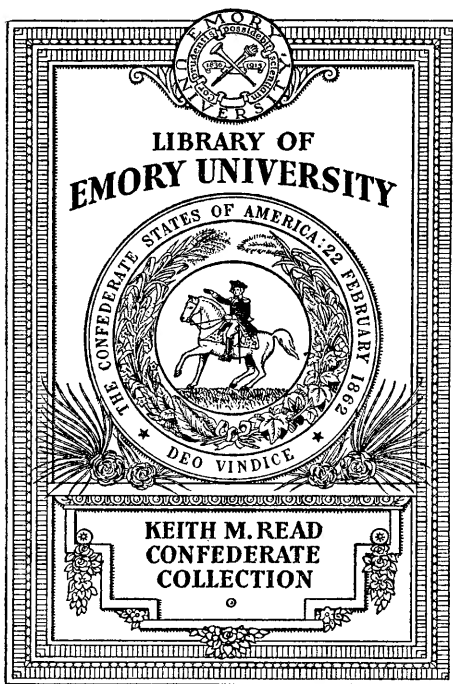


History of the Second Massachu-  
setts Regiment of Infantry:

Chancellorsville

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by George A. Thayer



HISTORY  
OF THE  
SECOND MASSACHUSETTS REGIMENT OF INFANTRY.

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CHANCELLORSVILLE.

A PAPER READ AT THE OFFICERS' REUNION IN BOSTON,  
MAY 11, 1880,

BY

GEORGE A. THAYER,  
CAPTAIN SECOND MASSACHUSETTS REGIMENT OF INFANTRY.

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BOSTON:  
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PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR THE ASSOCIATION.

# THE SECOND MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY

AND THE

## CAMPAIGN OF CHANCELLORSVILLE.

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It is assigned to me to tell the story of the part taken by our regiment in the campaign of Chancellorsville in May, 1863.

In the execution of the original plan of these papers, that the entire history of the Second Regiment should eventually be covered, this account, in its proper order, should follow the story of Antietam, which is yet to be written. It is therefore in place for me to give a rapid sketch of our movements from just after Antietam to the beginning of May, 1863.

In November, 1862, the earliest date of which I can speak from personal knowledge, the Second was encamped in a grove of handsome tulip-trees at Sharpsburg, Md., close by Blackford's Ford, the shallows of the Potomac over which Lee had retreated two months before, and opposite which Fitz John Porter, too closely following the Confederate rear-guard, had met with a sharp repulse from Early. General Gordon, commanding the brigade, was in Sharpsburg; and the head-quarters of General Slocum, the corps commander, just promoted from a division of Franklin's corps, were at Harper's Ferry. Captain William Cogswell was in command of the regiment.



The Sharpsburg camp gave a refreshing respite from the hardships which had been the regimental lot since the early summer. Although frequent rumors of the enemy's reappearance about the Shepardstown Heights opposite compelled heavy details of pickets at the river, still the men were snugly housed in quarters of boards and logs, the officers were yet indulged in wall tents (a luxury soon to disappear till the end of the war, save for the brief taste of Paradise when the regiment was upon its holiday service of suppressing draft riots in New York), fruitful Maryland made up the shortcomings of the commissariat, and familiar faces of convalescents and exchanged prisoners were daily reappearing in the streets to add zest to our social life.

In the yet soft and sunny autumn days, broken only by an occasional flurry of snow or by a north-west blast which roared harmless far above our sheltered camp, there were delightful compensations in the life of the woods and fields for even the monotony of guarding the river, and at least one novice found his initiation into the ways of war to have more of romance than of sternness.

But these days of recuperation were put to an end by the march of December 10, which took us by the way of Antietam Iron Works, Maryland Heights, and Harper's Ferry, into Virginia, to become once more a part of the Army of the Potomac.

For a month, we were about Fairfax Station, with an occasional excursion to Occoquan Creek in search of Stuart's raiding parties; and there one supreme effort of architectural skill, vying with the best work of the days when all possible constructive trades were represented in the regimental rank and file (there were even thatchers to be found in those early days), showed that the genius for building camps was not yet dead. But this masterpiece was no sooner finished than the summons came to march toward Fredericksburg, our portion of Burnside's famous "mud march"; and the sole satisfaction of our labors was a touching, because unprecedented letter of gratitude from the Fifteenth Vermont, sent to us

weeks afterward, to the effect that they had inherited our estates and found our handiwork as creditable to our taste as it was sumptuous for its new possessors.

From January 19th to the 23d, we were on the road. On the night of the 20th, we bivouacked in Dumfries graveyard, the only open ground near that decrepit village; and while we slept, with that placid repose which becomes the sedative air of a cemetery, the north-east rain began to pour. To those of us who, weatherwise, had discerned the signs of the sky in the evening, and had pitched our shelter tents high up the hill slope, the pattering was only a lullaby; but there were more careless or unfortunate souls who had disposed themselves in the hollows among the sunken graves, from whom, at midnight, above the noise of the storm, arose sounds of wailing which betokened that the floods were disputing the right to their beds.

The morrow's march was not a happy one. Quantico Creek, at the foot of our hill, was bridged with a single log for the footmen, being presumptively fordable; and now the stream was swift and fast swelling. There was an occasional plunge into the current by the dizzy-headed, and the most went in above the ankles. And all day the wagons and artillery labored in the bog, while the troops shivered on the roadsides in the furious north-easter. There was one philosopher of K Company, who, possibly zealous for the repute of his company for soldierly neatness, was seen under the lee of a tree-trunk, shaving himself in all the dismal cold and soak. At night, we had gone somewhat less than a mile. But a thicket of young pines and roaring fires lightened our tribulations; for we still had wherewithal to eat, and sleep came without coaxing. Another day of rain and mud, the latter mitigated for the trains by the discovery of a corduroy road; at evening, the contemplation of the fact that our rations had given out and no commissary supplies were within reach; a rapid push the next day for the nearest quartermaster's post, inspired by the consideration that we had had no breakfast; and, late in the afternoon, dirty, tired, and hollow

with fasting, we reached the woods of Stafford Court House, which was to be our abiding place for the next four months, with the intermission of the ten days to Chancellorsville and back.

The movement of Slocum's command has its explanation in what was transpiring with the army of General Burnside at Falmouth. That general's plan had been to cross the Rappahannock at Banks Ford, six miles above Fredericksburg, with the main army; while Sigel, under whom was the Grand Division consisting of the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps, was assigned the duty of guarding communications with Falmouth and the railroad to Acquia Creek. When the storm broke out, Franklin's and Hooker's divisions were in bivouac at the ford, and Sigel was in place with his advance.

The plan was utterly discomfited by the storm of the 20th and 21st; and as we reached Stafford, ten miles from the front, the rest of the army had, as far as possible, resumed its old quarters about Falmouth.

Three days later, on the 26th of January, Major-General Joseph Hooker announced his succession to the command of the Army of the Potomac. The movement which opened the Chancellorsville campaign began on the 27th of April. We were therefore three months fitting for action, than which a similar length of time was never more faithfully devoted by an army to the work of preparation for vigorous warfare. Notwithstanding a natural distrust of Hooker felt by many of the general officers on account of his tendency to boastfulness and a certain impatience of subordination to his superiors, he soon won the hearty confidence and admiration of the army (and of our regiment) by his decisive and wise administration of affairs. He infused great energy and a fine spirit of emulation into all departments of his command. Discipline was made rigid, and praise and censure judiciously distributed among the different organizations. General Order No. 18 designated by name a few regiments and batteries which appeared upon

close inspection to deserve honor for their soldierly condition; and that this distinction was not indiscriminate, as such orders often are, appears from the fact that but three regiments of Massachusetts (whose troops were among the best in the army) were commended, the Second being one of these. Desertion and absenteeism, which had prevailed to an enormous extent (so that in January nearly three thousand officers and eighty-two thousand enlisted men were away from their posts without sufficient cause), were peremptorily checked. Incompetent officers and shirks were summarily got rid of when detected. Officers' recitations in tactics, daily drills, and frequent parades and reviews were required.

Close attention was paid to the health and comfort of the rank and file. The rations were the best afforded by the Army Regulations, and nothing which concerned the *morale* of the command was deemed too insignificant for the attention of the commander-in-chief.

The Second shared the prevailing vigorous tone. Although three of its Companies, B, E, and G, were detailed at corps head-quarters under Captain Charles F. Morse, leaving to the seven remaining companies the arduous routine of camp duty, there was no abatement of the tasks pertaining to thorough preparation for the great work of the spring. The line officers were daily summoned by bugle-call to Captain Cogswell's regimental head-quarters to make deliverance of their knowledge of Casey's tactics, and in the plain by brigade head-quarters these acquisitions were put into practice in company, regimental, and brigade drills and dress-parades. We were all well-worked and well-cared for, and therefore in the best condition of body and mind.

Under the reorganization which promptly engaged Hooker's attention, the army consisted of seven corps of infantry, and one of cavalry under Stoneman. Of the infantry corps, Reynolds had the First, Couch the Second, Sickles the Third, Meade the Fifth, Sedgwick the Sixth, Howard the Eleventh, and Slocum the Twelfth; and to each was assigned a distin-

guishing badge, to be borne upon the general flags and wagon trains, and worn by the soldiers upon their caps. The 20th of April marks our first use of the red star, our division emblem, which was through the rest of the war particularly honorable and convenient in designating our corps associations, but, in the tangle and confusion of the coming campaign, was found to afford an indispensable clew for leading estrays back to their respective commands.

The two divisions of the Twelfth Corps were, as heretofore, under Williams and Geary. The three brigades of the First Division were led by Generals Knipe and Ruger, and Colonel Ross of the Twentieth Connecticut; and the several regiments of the Second Brigade were commanded,—the Second Massachusetts by Colonel Samuel M. Quincy (returned early in March from convalescence from wounds received at Cedar Mountain), the Third Wisconsin by Colonel Hawley, the Thirteenth New Jersey by Colonel Carman, the Twenty-seventh Indiana by Colonel Colgrove, and the One Hundred and Seventh New York by Colonel Diven.

The entire force of Hooker's command of all arms present for duty April 30 was one hundred and twenty-three thousand men, thirteen thousand of whom were in Slocum's corps. Confronting these were not far from sixty-two thousand men, under Lee and his principal lieutenant, Jackson, Longstreet being detached.

The Confederates were in high spirits, admirably disciplined, alert, and safe behind substantial fortifications, stretching for twenty miles from Skenker's Neck below to Banks Ford above Fredericksburg. When their own arsenals had not amply equipped them with new muskets and cannon, the thoughtfulness of our British cousins had supplied the deficiency; and the Union Committee on the conduct of the war had been all winter, through its hearings of discontented and mutually jealous officers, proffering them advice concerning the weak points in their defences. To say that with all Lee's prevision of our probable movements, and the difficulty of preventing any Union plans from being the common talk

of the army before they began to be executed, Hooker effectually surprised the Confederate commander, and nearly neutralized the value of his elaborate system of field works, is to pay the highest testimony to the Union General's talent for war.

It is not an altogether unnecessary digression in the story of the regiment's campaign to deal in a somewhat cursory manner with the positions and plans of the army on the eve of its spring operations; for thus alone can our own movement be made to have any meaning or permanent interest.

To Hooker was presented the problem of drawing Lee from behind his impregnable works on the banks of the Rappahannock, and compelling him to accept battle upon terms favorable to the Union Army's success.

The southerly banks of the river consist, at some places, of comparatively steep bluffs, a hundred and fifty feet high, cut by trickling streams and frequently heavily wooded; at other places, of bottom lands which gradually swell into hills of a considerable elevation at a distance of from three-quarters of a mile to a mile and a half from the river margin, this latter characteristic belonging to the region just about Fredericksburg, where, though it was not difficult to make a crossing under the protection of our artillery, our troops would presently emerge under an intolerable fire of the strongly entrenched enemy. To court battle with reasonable chance of good fortune, the field selected must be well above the fords guarded by any respectable force of the vigilant Confederates; and this choice was promptly made by Hooker.

Stoneman with his ten thousand cavalry was to make a long detour around Lee's left (crossing the river at Rappahannock Station), and to reach the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad in season to co-operate with the infantry advance by cutting the enemy's line of supplies and harassing his retreat as soon as that calamity was imposed upon him. It may as well be said here that this portion of the programme utterly miscarried. Stoneman did not pass the

river until the infantry corps were well upon their way to Chancellorsville, instead of anticipating them a fortnight, and, when he did attain Lee's rear, did but little damage. With the exception of the help given by Pleasanton's brigade, the cavalry co-operation was of no moment in the campaign.

The First, Third, and Sixth Corps were to make strong demonstrations in front of and below Fredericksburg, to detain as many of the enemy as possible, and, upon the first signs of his weakening his lines here, to assault and carry his positions. The Second Corps was to lie near the United States Ford, ten miles above, until its crossing should be covered by the movements farther up stream. The Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Corps were to move to Kelly's Ford, fifteen miles above, with utmost expedition and secrecy, and, that passed, to push by divergent columns over the Rapidan, and thence get immediately in Lee's left rear, extending a hand to the Second Corps, now free to cross. Then, with a largely preponderating force pressing him on front and flank, it seemed as if Lee must be crushed or driven disastrously southward.

The marching forces were put in shape for expeditious work. Eight days' rations were carried by the men; and the trains were reduced to a few wagons with forage, two ambulances and a battery to each division, and pack-mules laden with small ammunition. The remaining artillery and baggage was to stay in reserve near the United States Ford.

At six o'clock on Tuesday morning, April 27, the Second moved out of its camp at Stafford. The back loads of the men were heavy, what with the extra rations, the sixty rounds of cartridge, and the inevitable accumulation of treasure of a winter's camp; but the roads were in capital condition, hard and dry, the air was delicious with spring warmth and fragrance, and the trees just bursting into young leaf, and the anemones and violets by the roadside gave that quickening to the imagination which exalts the spirits and makes burdens light. On the second day, Hooker passed us; and we knew we were a fragment of a formidable general movement.

Upon the second night, we bivouacked near Kelly's Ford. The enforced stillness of our camp, without drum-beat, even the mules cut short in the midst of their braying by a jerk of the halter and the customary expletive, the two or three smouldering fires of the regiment kept well under the hill-sides, and speedily put out, and the various precautions against discovery by a wary enemy, seemed to forebode a struggle in the crossing ; but the Eleventh Corps was easily over bright and early, and Captain Comstock's canvas pontoons were laid by sunrise for our solid highway.

Slocum's orders were to the effect that, as soon as he should pass the Rappahannock, he should send three or four smart marching infantry regiments and a regiment of cavalry to Germania Mills on the Rapidan, and take possession of the bridge there, if it was standing. For this service, Ruger's brigade was chosen, and with the Third Wisconsin and Twenty-seventh Indiana advanced as skirmishers, and the Second Massachusetts moving by the flank in the road, followed by a section of Cothran's Battery M, First New York Artillery, we proceeded to scour the country. The curious and sometimes frightened inhabitants (almost all women, the men as usual being absent) watched us from their doorways ; a sprightly damsel now and then responding to the compliments of the men concerning the special opportunities now afforded for matrimony, "the last chance," with "I'd marry a rebel, and not a Yankee." Occasionally, the cavalry scouts appeared with a squad of prisoners ; and presently, late in the afternoon, word came from the front that a considerable body of the enemy were in possession of the Germania crossing. The approaches to the Rapidan were through dense thickets of scrub-oak, up to the immediate bluff overlooking the river which spreads out for a few hundred yards into a comparatively easy plain. Upon the south bank (the Confederate side) were steep hills rising somewhat precipitously from the very edge of the river, which forms a decided bow at the ford, the bend being northward in such a shape that all the approaches to the ford were completely



covered by a cross-fire from those who should occupy the north bank.

In this mouth of a bag, three companies of Virginia infantry were at work rebuilding the bridge which had been destroyed in some former cavalry raid, all unsuspecting of our approach, although the cavalry advance had exchanged a few shots with them. But they probably took this to be a mere scouting party, and kept about their work.

The Second now replaced the Twenty-seventh Indiana in the advance, and, upon the right of the road (the Third Wisconsin upon the left), clambered up through the tangle of briars and black jack in formation by the right of companies to the front, so far as there could be any order in getting on, each man as best he could. But with laughter and eagerness such as a hunter feels when on the track of game (curious it is to look back upon the sensations of that hour of hunting fellow-creatures with no other emotion than the fear lest they should not be bagged), we emerged into the open field, and then with rapid sweep to the right, and with a few shots, more of warning against their trying to escape than of response to their defence, of which they had time to make scarce any, we had possession of the ford and its guard,—one hundred and three men, seven of them officers. And then, to complete our work, we plunged into the river. The water was cold, and up to our waists, and swift running; and many a man, holding above his head his ammunition and his other precious possessions which he wished to keep from the wet, found his feet disposed to fly upward too, so that, but for the cordon of cavalymen stationed below us, the perils of the flood would have been more fatal than those from rebel musketry. In bivouac among the scrubby pines beyond, we passed a wretched night, in our steaming clothes, which not even the huge fires we kept for lighting the bridge-builders availed to make other than a cold vapor bath, and with scanty meals for the officers, who in those days depended for edibles upon foraging or the sutler.

Thursday morning, we struck the road running toward Fredericksburg, and for ten miles had easy marching, only arrested briefly by Stuart's cavalry. At 4 P.M., we were in the woods not far from the Chancellorsville House, expecting merely to bivouac for the night. No attempt at breastworks was made, for there were no indications of the enemy's presence. Company H, being on picket at night, did indeed capture one man; but it attached far greater importance to the capture of sundry sheep who were so injudicious as to come within the picket lines.

But toward noon of Friday, the 1st of May, the familiar hollow ring of artillery and the cracking of skirmish shots in our front apprised us that we had struck the enemy; and, as we took up the advance and debouched into the open fields, the great parks of artillery and ambulances, and the masses of infantry of many corps resting in column in the fields, or pushing hastily over the divergent roads, with Hooker contemplating and directing affairs from his support of the columns of a spacious brick house, told us that here was likely to be the centre of impending great events. Our march was for a couple of miles, and then we halted and prepared to form in line of battle. Ambulances and loaded stretchers now and then passed us going to the rear. In an orchard by the roadside, a hospital had been improvised.

Sykes's division of the Fifth Corps had met Anderson in some works farther on, and these wounded were the results of his vigorous skirmishing.

Knipe's First Brigade was on our left, with skirmish line deployed, and a part of our brigade was being advanced in like array. A Confederate battery, apparently a quarter of a mile from us, was sending shells toward our lines. We were nerving ourselves for the business that was plainly at hand, when our preparations were stopped and we were ordered to go back to whence we had started.

As we retreated, the enemy's skirmishers slowly followed; and as we lay in our last night's lines, and worked energetically at forming breastworks from the logs, the crash of

musketry, the noise of artillery, and the yells of the Confederates, and responding hurrahs of the Union men, coming within a half-mile of our position, made it appear doubtful how the day had gone. But at evening, when the storm had subsided, a General Order from the commander-in-chief assured us that all was as well as heart could desire. The Union forces were planted solidly upon the flank of the Fredericksburg defences, and Lee must sally forth and fight us upon our chosen ground or make inglorious flight. Thereupon, we were comforted, and chuckled at the thought of the morrow.

But now, in order to give intelligibility to these regimental operations, we need to know something of the proceedings of the army down to this Friday night, and of the region of which we had had but fragmentary glimpses; as, indeed, what infantryman ever does know anything of a battle-field except the little patch of pasture, hill, or forest just before his eyes?

When Slocum had passed Kelly's Ford, he was closely followed by Meade with his Fifth Corps, who, simultaneously with our advance, pushed to Ely's (or Elley's) Ford near the mouth of the Rapidan, where, crossing with no resistance, he uncovered the United States Ford of the Rappahannock, behind which Couch's Second Corps was lying; thence he moved to Chancellorsville, which he reached with his advance about noon of Thursday, a short time before the arrival of Slocum, who, as senior officer, was authorized to direct the movements of the three corps,—namely, the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth.

Hooker enjoined upon Slocum to lose no moment until these corps were established at or near Chancellorsville, and, if the enemy was not found in any considerable force, to advance at all hazards, secure a position on the plank road to Fredericksburg, and uncover Banks Ford, so as to place his wing of the army within easy supporting distance of Sedgwick's wing before Fredericksburg. On Thursday evening, the only forces in his front were the three brigades of

Anderson's division, in all about ten thousand men, under Mahone, Wright, and Posey, who had been despatched from the vicinity of Fredericksburg as soon as Lee had had warning of the Union movements across the Rapidan, and who had passed Wednesday night near Chancellorsville, but, considering the position unfavorable in the midst of the dense woods, had fallen back on Thursday, pushed by Meade's skirmishers, to the junction of the Mine and plank roads, where they intrenched. Slocum says his two corps reached Chancellorsville at 2 P.M. of Thursday (my diary speaks of our going into bivouac about 4 P.M.); and therefore he had in hand fully thirty-six thousand men, with whom, under the letter of his instructions, as well as in obedience to their spirit, he ought to have pressed Anderson, and gained Banks Ford before Thursday night. Pleasanton, who was in the advance, says he urged Slocum to do this immediately; but the latter assumed that he was only expected to concentrate at Chancellorsville. In the light of the next day's events, it is extremely unfortunate that he did not take the course thus alleged to have been advised by Pleasanton.\* But Hooker had no criticisms, and only hearty approval to offer Slocum for the conduct of his movements; and the opportunity for making up this lack of enterprise was yet available Friday, when Hooker was in charge of operations. Couch had arrived at Chancellorsville at ten o'clock Thursday night, and Sickles with the Third Corps was close by.

In all, nearly seventy thousand men were in Hooker's hand; and although the enemy was strongly re-enforced on Friday morning by two other brigades of Anderson, by McLaw's division, and the three divisions of A. P. Hill, D. H. Hill, and Trimble of Jackson's corps, making his numbers about forty thousand, yet the progress of affairs when Friday's advance began showed that with no very persistent

\*It is not always easy to tell how many of General Pleasanton's suggestions concerning the proper conduct of a battle were made upon the actual ground, and how many were after-thoughts in hours of preparation of testimony to be offered to the Congressional Committee. Some of his later claims with regard to the battle are flatly contradicted by subordinate officers whose means of knowing the facts seem to be superior to his.

effort the desired ford could be attained. That determination seemed in Hooker's mind, as he gave instructions for Friday's advance. Meade was to take the left column, moving by the river road to a place betwixt two creeks known as Mott's and Colin's Runs, about two miles from Banks Ford and four miles from the Chancellorsville House. The Twelfth Corps, on the right, was to advance three miles from the Chancellorsville House, with the head of the column resting near one of the rude meeting-houses of that poor and scantily populated country, called Tabernacle Church; while the Eleventh Corps was to follow the Twelfth.

The movements were begun with great zeal, and it was this advance of the Twelfth Corps in which the Second was taking part, in the account just given.

Sykes's division of Meade soon struck Anderson's pickets and met with stubborn resistance, though decided headway was gained and the enemy's works developed. Knipe's brigade of Slocum also exchanged shots with the enemy and came within sight of his rifle-pits, although Sykes was so considerably in advance that the enemy was between him and the Twelfth Corps. All was going capitally. Our Second Brigade was preparing to deploy on Knipe's flank, Meade's supports were coming up to Sykes, when an aid from General Hooker, Captain Paine, rode hastily up with an order for Slocum to withdraw to the Chancellorsville House. The latter was astounded, and declined to take a verbal command for such an ignominious step; and in truth Captain Paine was equally chagrined at having to give it, and had mildly remonstrated with Hooker concerning its inexpediency.

But a strange transformation of temper had come over Hooker. He who, when leading a division or a corps, was wont to listen to no admonitions of caution in assailing a foe when he found him, and had dealt out unstinted condemnation of the commanders-in-chief who were ever ready to repress the ardor of victory, now that he had attained to

supreme authority, counted it a serious risk to expose his army to the attack of an enemy of half its numbers, apprehensive, as he alleges, that he could not throw his troops forward through the narrow passes of the woods with sufficient rapidity to prevent their being overwhelmed. In truth, the universal opinion, then as now, of all officers conversant with the state of affairs was that a paralysis of judgment had fallen upon Hooker; and the failure of the campaign, till that time holding out the most brilliant promise of success, was plainly foreshadowed, as will appear from acquaintance with the ground and conditions to which the contest was to be restricted.

The name Chancellorsville is derived from the single house or villa of the Chancellor family, situated on the plank road leading from Orange County to Fredericksburg. It was a large brick mansion, with tall portico columns extending up to the second story, and with ample accommodations for the many travellers who in the olden days made it their tavern. The clearing of a score of acres around the house constitutes the most extensive of the rare breaks in the dense forest of the "Wilderness," which stretches from Stafford Heights south-westward toward Orange Court House,—a wilderness wherein are a few stately groves, but mainly made up of stunted black-jack oak and pine, or of the young shoots which spring up luxuriantly after the woodman's axe, thick-set, and a fit lair for the small game which those of us who recall the "disturbance of mental equilibrium" which the sight of a rabbit used to beget in sundry of our associated regiments will remember to have been often started up along our lines, and whose appearance in unwonted numbers gave to the Eleventh Corps on Saturday afternoon the first warning of Jackson's impetuous attack. Through these thickets, four or five roads constitute the sole practicable passage for trains. There are few positions for artillery; and the lines of infantry, able to peer but a few rods through the curtain of shrubbery before them, can do little but to patiently await the assault, unable to make adequate provision for the concen-

tration of masses which the enemy may choose to bring upon any portion of their works. The advantages of the ground were thus entirely with the party assuming the offensive. But five or six miles on toward Fredericksburg the clearings are comparatively numerous, and free opportunity is afforded for the use of all arms. Thus, by being put upon the defensive in this tangled wood, we yielded at once the pre-eminence given us by our numbers, while granting our antagonist the privilege of administering his blows in the dark, and moreover, by failing to occupy Banks Ford, our army was cut in two, and Lee, if he could by feints keep one of Hooker's wings inactive before an inferior force, might proceed to defeat the other wing at his leisure.

On Friday morning, Meade was within a mile of the point occupied on the next Monday by Sedgwick, moving from Fredericksburg, who then took possession of Banks Ford, which he eventually made his line of retreat. To have simply held our ground on Friday, and worked by the left toward the river, would have been to put Lee betwixt our fire and that of Sedgwick, and to have completed more effectually that which General Warren says Sedgwick had done on Monday, until he was confronted by the mass of Lee's army (we meanwhile looking on as inactive spectators),—"whipped the rebels to pieces."

On Saturday morning, the Union Army was in the lines which had been accidentally chosen by tired troops on Thursday, bivouacking where it was most convenient to drop.

These lines may be roughly compared in shape to a bow, whose arrow, the plank road, ran by the Chancellorsville House toward Lee's lines. On the left of this road, facing the enemy, was Hancock's division of the Second Corps. On the right of the road was the Twelfth Corps, Geary's division being about half a mile south-west of the house, forming Slocum's left, and Williams in continuation resting his right in the woods not far from Hazel Grove, a mile and a half west of the house.\* Bending to the rear in prolongation of Slo-

\* Hazel Grove was one of the few eligible hills for artillery, and, in Confederate possession on Sunday, served as a most important point for enfilading our lines.

cum's line was, at first, Howard's corps, crossing the pike (which at this point runs westward from Chancellorsville) and extending as far as a small creek called Hunting Run, which afforded no natural protection for its flank; but Hooker, considering the position between Slocum and the pike to be one of the most vital parts of the line, put Birney's division in here, and placed Sickles' other two divisions behind it in reserve.

Saturday was occupied in completing breastworks, and was for the most part quiet, save an occasional skirmishing fire at different points along our front, which did not affect us. The Third Wisconsin and Twenty-seventh Indiana were somewhat in advance of the brigade, in works near the clearing's edge, for the purpose of having a cross-fire covering certain exposed angles of our lines. Unhappily, those advanced works of solid logs served to provide the enemy with a secure place of cross-fire upon our troops on Sunday morning.

While we were waiting through Saturday for something to happen, Jackson was making an audacious march for nearly fifteen miles around our front, to assail Howard's flank in the rear. With him were twenty-five thousand men, in the order of D. H. Hill (now Rodes), Trimble (now Colston), and A. P. Hill, the latter to be *our* opponent of Sunday morning. The condition of secrecy, which alone ought to have made this flank movement possible, was not secured. Birney saw Jackson's column at eight o'clock, and it was reported to Hooker. Infantry, artillery, ambulances, and baggage-wagons were observed from the high ground where a country road from Welford's Furnace, two miles south, intersects the plank road at Birney's position. Sickles says this column was watched for three hours. Its starting-point had been from that Tabernacle Church which was within Slocum's grasp on Friday morning; while the heavy firing on our front on Friday afternoon was upon Colonel Hawley's picket line near that same Welford's Furnace, by which Jackson's columns were moving. The explanation made at head-quar-



ters of this movement of the Confederates was that Lee was retreating toward Gordonsville, and an exultant telegram to that effect was sent to Washington.

Captain Charles F. Morse of our regiment, who was upon General Slocum's staff, says that "the scouts sent out by General Slocum reported the movement of a large force of the enemy to the right. This was announced to Hooker. I took the message to him, giving in some detail the number of regiments and batteries which had passed a certain point. He waved me off in his grand manner, and said he knew all about it; that Lee was in full retreat toward Richmond, and that he should strike him presently, and gobble up his wagon train."

At noon, Sickles received permission to assail this column, and straightway pushed Birney over the intervening swampy ground to Welford's, where two regiments of Berdan's Sharpshooters surrounded and captured Best's Twenty-third Georgia, the Confederate rear-guard, who were lodged in the Welford buildings. At two o'clock, our people had learned from the prisoners that Jackson's was a flanking and not a retreating movement; but nobody in authority appears to have believed or taken in the significance of this information, Sickles' attack upon his rear seeming to be thought sufficient to stay Jackson's progress, whatever its aim. To make the attack more effective, Sickles called for re-enforcements; and Whipple of the Third Corps and Williams' division were ordered upon his left, and Barlow's brigade of the Eleventh Corps upon his right.

It was about five o'clock when we left our works with the men's knapsacks (happily the officers' baggage was over the river, where it had been since the march began) guarded by small detachments from each regiment and by the Thirteenth New Jersey. The camp rumor was that Sickles had cut the enemy's retreating wagon train in two, and we were to finish the business; but Williams says he was to cross the unfinished bed of the Orange Railroad, and thence, sweeping around to the left, co-operate with Geary in attack-

ing the flank of Lee, if they should find him. Geary pushed forward, but met with resistance, and was withdrawn. Williams was not far from the railroad bed, the Second Regiment having moved perhaps three-quarters of a mile across a field to a woody hillside, where we lay while Colonel Brown's Confederate twelve-pounders were firing over our heads at Birney, whom he intensely annoyed. This battery was being silenced, Sickles was swinging around to the right, Williams was ready for his advance, when a crash of musketry in our rear, seeming to be in the very works we had just left, was followed by orders to return. As we emerged into the open ground, some horsemen were rushing frantically about, evidently affected by the panic whose far-off din was in our ears, and in their hurry our column was thrown into a momentary confusion, which was speedily righted by the presence of mind of both officers and men (for our old soldiers seldom lost their self-possession in such emergencies); and with a little "double quicking" the tangle was straightened, and we were halted in line, face toward the firing, which, however, was too far in our front to reach us with its bullets.

The noise yonder toward the region of the plank road, of mighty roar of battle and Confederate yells, with a too infrequent echo of hurrahs, was quite enough to make us nervous in conjecture of some grave disaster to the army; and the sight of riderless horses, of wagons and ambulances driven furiously, and of countless fugitives, often hatless and gunless, all streaming over the hill-slope behind us, with occasional tale of grief and shame from some participant in the stampede, whose courage was yet full of fight, did not add to our assurance. But amid this dismay for the common cause there was room for abundant lament for personal loss; for the worldly possessions of our rank and file in the shape of knapsacks with their contents of blankets and overcoats, not to mention valuables of tender home association, were clearly involved in the general capture of our recent lines, and, through the long night that followed, their lack added to our misery.

What had occurred, of whose full purport it was not for the subordinates of the army to learn till long after, is now a thoroughly discussed matter of history. While we were hugging the ground in the woods which covered us from the shells of Brown's Confederate guns, Jackson, with all of his force but the handful who were amusing us with their pretence of an attack, was far away toward the river upon the point of striking Howard's flank. The Eleventh Corps men, an isolated body with no immediate connection with the rest of the army on right or left, were cooking their supper in tranquil innocence of danger when the storm fell upon and licked them up, as the whirlwind drives the dust and leaves before it. A few brigades tried to face the blast, but in vain. Ambulances, artillery, commissary cattle, and terrified infantry fled as fast as the jam would permit, down the pike toward the mansion, and thence across the fields. Portions of Berry's division of the Third Corps helped to form some resistance to the impetuosity of the torrent, and to serve as a rallying point for that portion of the defeated corps which still had coherence of organization. Huntington, the chief of artillery of Whipple's division, rallied three six-gun batteries, and set them in the line of the enemy's advance near the road. But approaching darkness and the great disorder into which their rush after the fugitives had thrown the Confederate lines were the most effective of the checks to their pursuit, which would soon have brought them to Hooker's head-quarters.

By dusk, which was nigh, Slocum's chief of artillery, Captain Best, had thirty-four guns, double-shotted with canister, pouring awful fire down toward the enemy. The Confederates who tried to face it have told how the roadway, which a little while before was full of men, was immediately swept of every living thing. Stonewall Jackson, wounded in the twilight by some of his own soldiers, was being borne down the pike upon a stretcher, but had to be dropped by the roadside, while his bearers lay flat upon the ground, if perchance the fury would pass overhead. Captain Wilkins, of

Williams' staff, who had just been made prisoner, chanced to be within the course of the artillery, and bore witness to its effect in staying the Confederate advance. When the fighting was fairly done, A. P. Hill's division, now commanded by Heth (Hill being wounded), was within a mile of Chancellorsville, having driven Howard upwards of a mile, and occupied a portion of the Twelfth Corps' works, not far from the point which the Second Regiment had vacated. It was well for us that Jackson had fallen; for he would have pushed on in the bright moonlight, and there were no designated positions for the troops about head-quarters.

In the re-distribution of forces, compelled by this afternoon's havoc, the formation of the lines of Saturday night in our vicinity was as follows: The Second was placed in the edge of a grove of oaks, three-quarters of a mile in front and in sight of the mansion house, and at a right angle with the works of the day before. Betwixt us and the house was Fairview Cemetery, of whose existence as a burial-ground we had little suspicion. On its slope were Best's cannons. As we looked out before us in the bright moonlight, we could see only a valley of impenetrable woods. The Third Wisconsin was upon our right, extending its flank nearly up to the old works. The Twenty-seventh Indiana was upon our left, the Thirteenth New Jersey and the One Hundred and Seventh New York (so far as the latter regiment could be collected from its wanderings) in a second line in our rear. Two regiments of Knipe's brigade were upon Ruger's right, the Third Maryland and the One Hundred and Twenty-third New York. Still further, in prolongation of our division line, was Berry of Sickles' corps, the Eleventh Massachusetts of Berry's second line finding it necessary at daybreak to take the place of the Third Maryland, whose ranks, according to authentic accounts, disappeared without ceremony as soon as the enemy was heard approaching. Upon the other flank of our brigade were the divisions of Birney and Whipple, but pushed out in advance as far as Hazel Grove, near the place occupied

by us in the afternoon while we were being shelled by Brown. Geary's division was at right angles with our brigade's left, with something of an interval at the angle.

The recollections of that anxious night are likely to be long vivid with those who lay behind the improvised defences of such rails and fallen trees as could be hurriedly gathered together. Until midnight, Best's guns, a hundred yards in our rear, were plunging shells over our heads into the works held by the enemy; and, when these had become silent, we were aroused from such light slumber as we could snatch in the cold night air by an outbreak of firing in our immediate front, in which we expected momentarily to be called upon to take part.

The occasion was a movement of Birney's division from its position far out to the left, across our front, for the purpose of recapturing some artillery material left betwixt the lines in the afternoon by Whipple. When silence settled down upon this affair, the doleful notes of the whippoorwills took up the strain of depressing sounds; and now and then a frightened or wounded horse broke in with a neigh of agony. There was short respite of sleep even for the few who crept out under the darkness, and brought back a blanket or two taken from dead men or from some of our own abandoned knapsacks.

Besides the very slender breastworks we were able to throw up, we were slightly protected by resting below the crown of the wooded hill upon which we were stationed; although, when the shock of battle came, that portion of the regiment nearest the color company, at least, had little to shield them from the enemy's fire except the standing trees. The Twenty-seventh Indiana on our left seemed better protected. Colonel Colgrove had added a mixed company to his command, for fragments of two strange regiments wandering about without a head had reported to him for orders; and, finding two abandoned guns, he had put them under charge of a stray artillery lieutenant, supplying their gunners from his own regiment. All of his command appeared to be cov-

ered with a fair intrenchment, rapidly constructed during the night.

The Confederate troops to whom was assigned the attack upon Williams and Berry were of A. P. Hill's division, now under command of Heth. They consisted of Lane's North Carolina brigade, McGowan's South Carolina brigade (the First, Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Infantry, and Orr's Rifles), and Archer's brigade of Alabama and Tennessee men, each brigade composed of five regiments. They were placed in the above order, from our right to left.

Sunday had barely dawned, when heavy firing at our right announced Heth's assault upon Revere's brigade of Berry, which, in the course of an hour, melted away under the fierce fire, although the second line, containing the Eleventh Massachusetts, held its own much longer and in a manner to call out the high praise of those who watched its conduct. Then, out upon our left, came the crash of Archer's attack, and we felt that our time was coming; nor was the nature of that time reassuring when we saw the red legs of Collis's One Hundred and Fourteenth Pennsylvania Zouaves flying pell-mell toward us as soon as the enemy struck them. It was a blow of Archer and a run of Collis, save himself who could.

The exposed situation of Birney and Whipple in their advanced post in the wilderness had been observed by Hooker, and at daybreak their withdrawal was ordered.

Graham's brigade of six Pennsylvania regiments, one of which was the above-mentioned Zouaves, was covering this change of position, when Archer smote it with galling fire, against which it made but short stand, and then fell hastily back betwixt Geary and Williams. However it may have been with the better part of that brigade, some of its regiments behaved discreditably, judging from what may be read between the lines of the General's report and from what our own corps saw and felt.

Slocum's chief of artillery, Captain Best, reports that "an open field in that direction occupied by a brigade of troops and a battery was seemingly taken by a small force of the

enemy, and the battery turned upon us with fearful effect, blowing up one of our caissons, killing Captain Hampton of one of our batteries, and enfilading General Geary's line." Graham does not acknowledge loss of any cannon, but says Huntington's battery was hotly engaged and lost a caisson and some material. (In fact, he lost two guns wedged in among the trees or overturned in a gully.) The Confederate Archer reports that he captured four guns at this point. Osborn, the Third Corps chief of artillery, reports no loss of cannon. Whose, then, were the guns which so opportunely for Archer, so unhappily for us, were made available to sweep down our lines? The truth, as well as an army, sometimes gets entangled in thickets.\*

Sweeping impetuously down in the wake of Graham's retreat, the elated Confederates struck the Twenty-seventh Indiana with its conglomerate of allies. Would they stand? was the flash through our minds in that moment of dread suspense. A question gloriously answered by Colgrove, who, with frantic encouragement, now rushed to his infantry parapets, now to the mound where his two pieces of artillery were bellowing their furious defiance, and, as if transfusing his own utter fearlessness of exposure into all of his "boys," as he familiarly spoke of them, kept a sheet of fire blazing into the woods, before which, at a distance of seventy yards, Archer recoiled in confusion. Again, the Confederate brigade rushed to the assault, and again they met Colgrove's storm of bullets and canister, until they were fain to hurry out of his reach and regain their breath.

Now, McGowan's brigade, with Orr's Rifles and the First Infantry forming the right, which was to strike us, announced their coming in our front with their volleys and yells. As compared with Archer's attack, it seemed like the second gust of a tempest of hail when the wind has suddenly veered. The first had come from the south-west:

\* A possible solution of these contradictions is that Archer claimed what he did not capture (a frequent error in battle reports), and that the enfilading fire which did Captain Best so much injury was produced by the guns which the Confederate General Stuart placed at Hazel Grove as soon as Archer captured the hill.

this was from the north-west. It came with a rush and a shriek, as if it would beat down all before it. But it stopped short before the wall presented by the Second Massachusetts and the Third Wisconsin.

Steadily, the men of the Second stood up and delivered their fire. To the yell went back the cheer, and without intermission the roar and blaze and smoke of our volleys flew into the darkness of the woods beyond. Straight up in line our men stood, with but little covering save that given by the depression of the ground toward us and the living oaks. Some wavering there always is on such occasions, some trepidation of individuals. The instinct of life is strong, and there is a tremor about the heart of the stoutest as his companions plunge forward dead with a groan, or, hit in some sensitive part, cry out irrepressibly under the shock. But, happily, the absorbing duty of loading and firing, or preserving alignment and discipline, deadens personal apprehension. The blow that strikes one down is delivered from the dark without forewarning and without anticipation. And with our men there was little flinching, rather a uniform coolness, under conditions which are the severest trial of manly self-possession. Or, if there was excitement, it tended toward the spirit of daring and adventure which was ready to dash out into the midst of the elements and bring in some trophies from the opponents' hands. Our Color Guard was, as I suppose it ever had been from the regiment's first test in battle, a conspicuous centre of firmness and resolution. The standard-bearers dropped, but the flag floated out in the smoke; and when, as soon happened, the Confederates found it necessary to retreat to get their shattered ranks into order, it was the color company which led the eager pursuit with which we followed the beaten Southerners.

How long we had been loading and firing, it was hard to tell; but our ammunition was nearly gone, and many of our guns too much clogged with powder to be longer serviceable. With the discomfiture of our assailants there was a general forward movement of the brigade, and down we plunged into



that mysterious wood, where I, at least, not dull of vision nor particularly lacking in disposition to know what was going on before me, had seen absolutely nothing but smoke and flashes of fire; and indeed my general experience of battles is like that of some other officer whose testimony was reported by an English letter-writer, that the only enemy he ever chanced to *see* in a fight was a dead one. There were dead men plentifully about us, and broken weapons and equipments; and, as we moved, there were signs of the enemy once more, and another exchange of volleys and again an advance, till we were entangled in our old abatis of Friday's construction. There we stopped in suspense, and asked for powder; for our cartridge-boxes were empty, and part of the last shots had been supplied from the Confederate equipments under our feet. Nobody had ammunition to give us; and, as it was but a question of a few moments when the enemy would be re-enforced for another attack, we marched deliberately back, occasionally turning as we went, and as soon as our places were filled by other troops we proceeded toward the Chancellorsville House.

Now, we began to feel the effects of Archer's flanking fire. Shells and shot shrieked over our heads as we crossed a little brook at the foot of our fighting hill; and, when we lay down for a few minutes near the mansion, the pursuing artillery dropped a solid ball into the midst of Company E, fatally wounding two of its men. And apparently, although time is both slow and swift in battle, no sooner had the Third Corps brigade, which had succeeded us, occupied our woods, than they were overwhelmed; for the Southern yell was coming near, and bullets began to patter about us, and fragments of regiments in blue were hurrying out of the woods. In reality, they had a manly, stoutly contested fight over the old breastworks, from which they retreated only when far outnumbered and with ammunition expended.

And how this hot struggle of the last two hours (for so long the spectators tell us we had been at our deadly work) appeared to those with whom we had wrestled is recorded

in the fair and frank story told by an officer of the First South Carolina Infantry in Caldwell's history of McGowan's brigade. After announcing the reception of orders to make the assault, he continues: "Soon the yell was raised and the pace accelerated,—both mistakes; for the one discovered us to the enemy when we might have remained concealed, and the other disordered our line. However, we cleared the woods, and came upon a formidable abatis of felled trees. Beyond this, at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards, were the enemy's breastworks of logs.\* We were agreeably surprised to see no fire open from it upon us. We passed it with a shout, ascended to the crown of the eminence, and saw the enemy. Simultaneously, a fire was opened by the two sides. We were on a pretty steep hill, their main line on the slope of the opposite hill. At the base of these hills, in a ravine, were a few men,—skirmishers, I judge, who had fallen back before us. Some persons insist that the Federal main line was in regular intrenchments; but my recollection is that they had only some rifle-pits. We could not see much; for the morning was foggy, and the smoke of both lines soon became so dense that I could not even distinguish the colors of the enemy. The firing waxed furious. The advance was checked, the cheering was hushed. All on both sides addressed themselves to loading and firing as rapidly as possible. The two right regiments were most hotly engaged. Indeed, the Thirteenth and Fourteenth had to fire at right oblique. The slaughter of the Rifles and the First was immense. General McGowan, just behind the colors of the First, huzzahed lustily, seeming to be at the highest enthusiasm. The Federals fired with unusual accuracy. It was to be expected, for we stood in full relief upon the crest of the hill. The few men they had scattered along the ravine behaved with provoking composure. They deliberately loaded their pieces behind the trees, stepped out, picked their men, fired, and returned to the trees to re-load. In the course of time, however, they were discovered, and

\*.This was the old, abandoned line.

forced to lie close. Archer's brigade, as I understand it, was to move clear on our right, and at some inclination to us, so as to strike the enemy in flank. The latter must have apprehended something of the sort, for they hugged the fortified hill with singular pertinacity. But now we were at a standstill. The enemy became emboldened, and advanced upon the unprotected right flank of our brigade.

At last, he swung forward so as almost to enfilade our line. The Rifles gave way. The First Regiment followed it slowly, and the movement extended gradually to the left of the brigade. But we halted at the line of works about seventy or eighty yards from the last position; and, the enemy continuing to advance, we resumed the battle. General McGowan was wounded upon the works. Brigadier-General Colston brought in a fresh line, saying they would show us how to clear away a Federal line. But their reckoning was not accurate. They were forced back with us into the works. The firing continued unintermitted, deadly."

The rest of the narrative pertains to the attack made by our Third Corps' successors, who, be it said to the credit of those upon whose earlier conduct there seemed to be a shadow, fought with utmost courage and tenacity. The losses of the two regiments who were our chief assailants are given as follows: In the First South Carolina, twelve killed and eighty wounded; in the Rifles, twenty killed and ninety-one wounded. Our own loss was twenty-one killed and not far from a hundred wounded, a record which speaks forcibly of the unerring accuracy of our opponents' fire.

Of the bravery of those with whom we had clutched in death-struggle there need be no words of praise. It was Anglo-Saxon stock against scions of the same trunk.

Our stay near head-quarters under heavy fire was short; and in an hour after we had left the mansion it was in Confederate hands. In a few hours, it was a pile of rubbish.

It was probably while we were in vain asking for ammunition, or soon after, that a cannon-ball striking one of the

portico columns against which Hooker was leaning rendered him senseless, and left the army practically without a head at a most critical moment. Couch took command within an hour or two, but all plan and coherence of defence were at an end. We sauntered through the woods from our last untenable halting-place, knowing too well, from the increasing nearness of the musketry and the distinctness of the peculiar Southern shout, that the day was going against us, and presuming then, in our ignorance of the facts, that the misconduct of some of our troops, notably the Eleventh Corps, combined with the preponderance of the enemy, had been the chief occasions of so disastrous an outcome of so splendid a promise. But, as the reports gradually came to us of the troops upon our side who had not been engaged, and of the active fighting's being confined to the Third and Twelfth Corps who had vainly called for help, of which there was abundance, our wonder grew whether we were really beaten or only gathering for a new and more decisive stroke. That the latter was the truth was the confident expectation and desire of the larger proportion of the general officers, when the army was drawn up in compact lines around the United States Ford. Howard was anxious to retrieve his reputation; Meade, Reynolds, and Couch had not been tried; and Sedgwick, after what seems now to have been an excess of caution in carrying Fredericksburg Heights, was, on Monday forenoon, well on his way toward Chancellorsville in Lee's rear. It was exasperating for us to lie in our intrenchments, occupied only with watching the burning of plantation buildings on our picket front, and listening to the booming of artillery out at Salem Church, while not a shot was being fired from Hooker's lines. The entire enemy before us consisted of Heth's, Rodes', and Colston's divisions of Jackson's corps, probably less than twenty thousand men. Slocum now held the extreme left of the line, resting on the Rappahannock. Across the stream was the park of wagons and ambulances, and in the mist of Monday morning we were aroused by artillery close upon us. It

was Major Hardaway, of Anderson's division, amusing himself, and keeping us in expectation of something more serious by shelling that wagon park. There was dire confusion among the teamsters, and some injury to the hospitals close by; but soon the trains were whipped out of reach, and all was quiet again. Upon this demonstration, Anderson proceeded to Salem Church to join the masses arrayed against Sedgwick, who, left to himself with his inferior numbers, fell back at night upon Banks Ford, where he crossed by Tuesday morning, as we were gathered for similar intent at the United States Ford. The only explanation of this strange and, under ordinary circumstances, criminal apathy of Hooker is that he was mentally disabled by the shock at the mansion house. All day, he was in a sluggish, bewildered state, rousing from a torpor to answer oft-repeated questions, and then lapsing into drowsiness.

Tuesday night was of a sort to make us thoroughly woe-begone. It rained heavily in the afternoon, and filled our trenches and saturated our clothes. Just after dark, we were put under arms in marching order, and thus kept till midnight, when we were ordered back into the trenches, but probably, not being amphibious, we were content to let our men stay as near them as the puddles would permit.

At half-past three in the morning, the irresolution which seemed to be debating whether the army should take the hint given by the swollen river and remain on the south bank to fight the battle out, or go back to its old camps and prepare for another campaign, settled that we should make our way home to Stafford County.

In the morning twilight, we were huddled about the United States Ford, apparently the entire army there,—a huge multitude of men, in orderly array, but anxious and dispirited, momentarily expecting to hear the enemy's artillery choose us for its tempting target. But no mishap came, and we were soon safe out of harm's reach, and plunging through mud and the innumerable creeks which crossed our road for twenty odd miles, until, at twilight, cross, tired, and home-

sick, we crawled into our dismantled huts, covered ourselves with the blankets seasonably brought us by the welcome wagons, and went to sleep, reckless whether we should be prompt at reveille or not.

As we had time to think over the eventful experiences of the past fortnight, there was indeed much to sadden and still more to exasperate us, but nothing which could make us lose heart.

The desolate camp, which we had left forever as we had hoped, was soon made tenatable, if not so inviting as in its fresh days.

The many houses from which one and another brave man had gone upon his last march were presently astir with new occupants, although there were about these houses associations which now and then would bring tears into eyes accustomed to sights of death and maiming. The thinned ranks, weakened indeed in elements which would never be restored, but yet strong in the quality which wins battles, drew closer together, and took up the routine of guard and drill as before.

The full numbers, the fine discipline, the courage and enthusiasm for high exploit with which not we alone, but the greater part of the army, had crossed the Rappahannock, had been made to stand useless before a rare opportunity of pushing the war well toward its end, or had been wasted in disjointed assaults upon columns of the enemy which were always allowed to be numerically heavier than those which attacked; but then it had often been the fate of the noble Army of the Potomac to be sent forth on futile ventures, whose results might shake its confidence in the capacity of its leaders, but never abated its assurance that good fortune would some day settle on its banners. And this was not the first nor would it be the last time in which the Second had had a part in forlorn hopes, in which nothing was gained but honor, but from which it came out still courageous and hopeful for another trial. We had had disappointment, but there was no disaster. We were ready and waiting for Gettysburg.













